

# The Builder.

No. 1081.

SATURDAY, APRIL 5. 1845.



OR more than two years past a committee, appointed for the purpose of obtaining the restoration of the noble church of St. Mary Redcliffe, at Bristol, probably the finest parish church in England, have spared no pains to raise subscriptions, and to induce their fellow-citizens and the admirers of ecclesiastical architecture throughout the country, to assist them in the proposed undertaking.

From the estimates of the architects employed to survey the church, it appears that an outlay of 40,000*l.* is required to complete the restoration; but, after mature deliberation, the committee were of opinion they might with perfect prudence commence the work when 7,000*l.* should be subscribed; and it was accordingly resolved, in January last, that when such a sum was obtained, plans and estimates should be submitted to a meeting of the subscribers for their approval.

After all the efforts made, however, only 5,400*l.* have been raised; and expenses have been incurred which reduce the amount strictly applicable to the restoration to 4,000*l.* The committee found that the fabric was becoming daily worse and worse, and being anxious to induce the subscribers to allow the application of their subscriptions to the substantial repair of the fabric, a meeting was held on Friday, the 28th ult., when the Mayor, Mr. R. P. King, presided, and the following resolutions, amongst others, were carried unanimously:—

"That this meeting would see with deep regret the further decay, and perhaps irretrievable ruin, of St. Mary Redcliffe Church; and as more extensive dilapidation can only be averted by the application of the present subscriptions to the work of repair, this meeting earnestly hopes that all the subscribers will consent to an immediate payment of the residue of their subscriptions—to be applied under the direction and control of the committee, according to the recommendation contained in their report; and that the committee be requested to make early application to each of the subscribers not now present, or otherwise consenting, for their permission to apply the balance of his subscription forthwith to the same purpose."

The Mayor was most anxious to aid the views of the committee, and urged that it would be a national disgrace if the beautiful structure were allowed to go further into decay. They could hardly hope at present to see the church restored and the church made perfect, but substantial repairs they were bound to attend to; and he hoped the subscribers would permit the amount already raised to be applied forthwith for that purpose. Mr. W. L. Clarke, in moving the first resolution, said, although they could not effect their whole object, the subscribers who assented would have the satisfaction of handing down the church in good repair to the next generation, to receive then that complete restoration, which they themselves had desired to obtain, but unfortunately could not.

Mr. James Gibbs rejoiced that the committee had resolved to begin this work; but

deplored that, in a city of merchant-princes, whose revenues might be estimated not by thousands, but by hundreds of thousands, and even millions, there was any difficulty in raising the sum required. He trusted, however, as the work proceeded that additional aid would be given.

Mr. W. P. King saw no reason to despair of the ultimate restoration of their noble church; such works were not effected in one year or ten. The Cathedral of Cologne had been built bit by bit, and, in fact, had never been finished. But the present King of Prussia having interfered, a spirit had arisen, and in all Germany subscriptions were being raised for its completion. All the large cathedrals had taken many years in building, and the town of Wigan owed its name to the circumstance of such a building being so long in progress, that the expression of "We began" was so often used, that corrupted into Wigan, it became the name of the place. He thought they had only to begin, and they would go on progressing; their very scaffolding, and the knowledge that they were progressing with the work, would be their best advertisement, for they could not expect people to give large subscriptions to a work not yet begun; he did not fear but the youngest among them might live to see the restoration of that beautiful steeple, which had been thrown down by the thunder-storm.

Mr. Proctor felt himself unable to assign a reason for the want of funds. Here was a fine old church, admitted on all hands to be a credit to the city and nation at large, in the midst of a professedly Christian country, and surrounded by a population who were sending money all over the known world to build churches; yet that church was going to decay, and the means to prevent it could not be obtained. The amount already subscribed might appear large; but was not the object worthy of it? Large as it was, it was less than had been expended on one mile of railway within the vicinity of its walls. He could only assign as an excuse, that persons did not believe the church was in so dilapidated a state as was stated; but he assured them they would find it so. In many parts it was so dangerous, that it ought not to be approached; many of the pinnacles were tottering, and large pieces of stone were constantly falling; and the roof over the chancel was in so bad a state, as to deter any person from proceeding along it. The time was come to decide whether Redcliffe Church should exist a proof of their fidelity to the trust deputed to them by their fathers, or a monument of the neglect and parsimony of the present generation. He considered the credit of England was at stake, and hoped that none would relax in their exertions.

We echo Mr. Proctor's words—the credit of England is at stake; and we hope all who feel interested in our ancient ecclesiastical architecture will lend their aid to effect the restoration of the beautiful church of St. Mary Redcliffe. If it be allowed to fall into ruin, a disgrace will attach to Bristol, which will be hard to remove. Its beauty as a work of art, its antiquity, and its peculiar associations, render this church equal in interest to any structure in the kingdom. Well might the elegant of Canynges, who built the greater part of the present church, and died in 1474, inscribe on his monument:—

"The buildings rare that here you may behold  
To shrine his bones, deserve a tomb of gold:  
The famous favourite that he here hath done,  
Shames in its sphere as glorious as the stone."

What needs more words, the future world he sought,  
And set y<sup>e</sup> pomp and pride of this at naught;  
Heaven was his aim, let heaven be still his station.

That leaves such works for others imitation."

The committee have acted wisely in determining to commence the repairs forthwith, and there is every reason to believe that when they begin in earnest, additional funds will be forthcoming. We give them "God speed ye" in the good work, and shall report progress from time to time. Such monuments are the property of the nation, and should be the care of the nation. If we cannot build such ourselves (or at least, do not, which is the same in effect) at all events let us religiously preserve those our forefathers have left us.

## BURIAL-GROUND PRACTICES.

The revolting occurrences in the Spafelds burying-ground, to which we alluded in direct public attention, have produced so strong an impression generally, that, whatever may be the immediate result of Mr. Mackinnon's long-expected motion for preventing interments in large towns, we may expect considerable mitigation of the evil before long. A true bill has been found against two managers and the lessees of the burying-ground in question, and the audacity of Mr. Bird in writing the letter which we admitted into our columns, is fully shown.

At St. Saviour's, Southwark, on Easter Tuesday, the parishioners in vestry assembled, resolved to discontinue burying the dead in the grave-yard of that parish, in consequence of its over-crowded state. And it is to be hoped that the inhabitants of several parishes in the city which we could name, will forthwith determine that no more shall be added to the mass of corruption engendering disease, over which they sit some hours every week.

It will scarcely be believed that an analysis of a gallon of water from the pump in Spafelds ground, lately made, shewed that it contained 160 grains of human matter.

Throughout the discussion of the subject, which has recently taken place, we have not observed that sufficient allusion has been made to the gentleman by whose exertions, almost unaided, and at considerable expense to himself, the fatal evils of the system generally, and the atrocities committed to the Spafelds ground in particular, have been made known to the public. Mr. G. A. Walker has applied himself for several years past to point out the evils attendant on burying in towns, and to the reformation of abuses of the practice known to exist, and it is to be hoped that some public acknowledgment of his services in this respect will be made. It is too often the case that those who have really fought the battle are forgotten in the moment of victory.

## ENCROACHMENT ON HYDE PARK.

We view with extreme jealousy any steps tending to contract the few open spaces set apart for the enjoyment and healthful recreation of the people. The parks are the Londoners' privileges, the Londoners' salvation; they are properly called the lungs of the metropolis, and as we all know what an important part of the body the lungs are, should be guarded with the greatest care, and preserved intact at any cost. We are led to make this remark by the preparations which are in progress, apparently to enclose a portion of Hyde Park, between Albert-gate and Hyde Park Corner, and call loudly on those who have power, to lend their aid to prevent this encroachment. If the intention be persisted in, a public meeting should be called, and a memorial therefrom presented to the Metropolitan Improvement Commissioners, and the Health of Towns Commissioners, protesting their interference. No time should be lost.

"The true danger," says Burke, if we remember rightly, "is when liberty is nibbled away for experiments and by parts;" and so it is with our parks. If we quietly permit this fresh slice to be taken off (as was done a few years since near Park-lane), we shall have the precedent followed all round its confines, even if it stop there; and afterwards the same authority which encloses, may please to plant villas and cottages in the pleasant park-land thus created.